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On Bended Knees: Investigative Journalism and Changing Media Culture in Nigeria

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Nigeria, with one of the most robust and freest media in Africa, provides a fertile ground for unencumbered investigative journalism. In the last five years, except for episodic exclusives in one or two newspapers, investigative stories have waned. Why are Nigerian newspapers not engaging in investigative reporting, and what implication does this hold for the watchdog role of the press? This article examined the challenges facing investigative journalism using theoretical and empirically proven studies on variables that decrease journalistic autonomy. Twenty-five structured interviews involving journalists, journalism teachers, and civil society activists were conducted in Lagos and Abuja. The two cities are where media are mostly produced and consumed, where tensions and struggles for control of information, communication, political thoughts, and social discourses take place and, where there exist, but largely unreported, massive political malfeasance, rampant sleaze and pervasive pillage of the Nigerian commonwealth. Findings show that investigative journalism is bogged by a welter of socio-cultural and economic factors as well as professional deficits. The ownership of newspapers by politically exposed individuals and near-zero protection for journalists have worked to restrict investigative journalism. These tendencies tend to imperil the watchdog role of the press.

Keywords: Investigative journalism, journalistic autonomy, media culture, Nigerian press, social responsibility, transformation

Nigeria is adjudged to have one of the most robust and freest media in Africa (Demarest & Langer, 2018). The 1999 Nigerian Constitution in Chapter 11, Section 22, guarantees freedom of the press. There is also the Freedom of Information Act which not only allows journalists and the general public access to information concerning any public or government organization but also compels the head of such organizations to provide any information requested by a member of the public not later than 30 days from the date of request. In the light of this seemingly conducive legal framework, investigative journalism should have unencumbered flourish. However, in recent times, except for a few episodic exclusives, investigative reports have become rare on the pages of mainstream and peripheral newspapers in Nigeria. A study that sought to ascertain sources of news for Nigerian journalists found that newsgathering through investigative processes accounted for only six percent of newspaper stories compared to 60 percent sourced from scheduled events (Omenugha & Oji, 2008). Another study found that information sourced through the personal enterprise of journalists accounted for only 25 percent as against 58.7 percent from routine sources (Ciboh, 2017). Although the Nigerian press gives ample coverage to

issues of fraud and corruption (Adesoji, 2010), Suleiman (2017) found that only 4.7 percent of corruption scandals and reports published by four Nigerian newspapers over 12 years were independently generated. An overwhelming 90 percent of stories regarding real or suspected corruption emanated from government agencies or foreign media.

As evinced from the above studies Nigerian newspapers appear to have developed a proclivity not only for recycling press releases from politicians and corporate entities, but also, adept at circulating spins and partisan rhetoric as exclusives even as they are inclined to publishing verbatim outlandish and sometimes, spurious claims by government and its agencies, without any rigorous interrogation. According to Oso (2012, p. 45), "It is becoming increasingly difficult to separate news independently and disinterestedly gathered and produced from public relations stories and advertisement." There is a perception that investigative journalism is in dire straits. A decline in investigative reporting has the potential to weaken the public watchdog role of the press. For a country like Nigeria with a lax regulatory atmosphere, where many public and private entities operate opaque systems, investigative journalism can provide information to scrutinize the performance of officeholders. This research, therefore, asks: Why is investigative journalism on bended knees and how does this affect the social responsibility of the media?

The bulk of scholarship on investigative journalism has been concentrated on American and European societies. Existing studies on investigative journalism in the African region had tended to focus on a specific aspect of society, such as factors militating against investigating cases of corruption scandals (Ettema & Glasser, 2007; Suleiman, 2017; Yusha'u, 2009). The research focus is often narrow, mainly examining why journalists were not investigating and reporting corruption cases. That most journalists and newspapers did not pursue corrupt cases was clear, but why they did not do it was not all too clear. This study, therefore, takes a holistic view of investigative journalism in Nigeria to ascertain why Nigerian newspapers and journalists are reluctant to engage in investigative journalism? The study examines the questions: what are the reasons for the gradual disappearance of investigative journalism? Could the disappearance of this critical aspect of journalism be due to a changing media culture (in this case, eroding value for robust journalism and professional excellence) or socioeconomic factors? What implication does this hold with regards to the ability of journalists to fulfil their social responsibility function? Additionally, the study attempts to proffer strategies that could help revitalize and sustain the craft of investigative journalism. The next section examines the social, political and historical context underpinning investigative journalism in Nigeria.

Literature Review

The Nigerian media space is known for its vibrancy. Over the years, the country has produced independent journalists - highly trained critical minds, who practised a healthy culture of robust journalism. From the heydays of newspapering in the 1930s, the local press had emerged as a potent weapon for the nationalist struggle and resistance to the British colonial authorities. For instance, *The Times of Nigeria* under the editorship of John Bright-Davies, *The Lagos Daily News* owned by politician and journalist, Thomas Babington Macaulay, and *West African Pilot* founded in 1937 by Nnamdi Azikiwe, was a constant threat to the colonial administration (Bourne, 2018; Uche, 1989). The above papers along with the *African Challenger*, *Lagos Weekly Record* among others, led the charge of anti-colonial, pan African sentiments and reporting well-researched exclusives about secret policies and misdemeanours of the colonialists as well as exposing official misconducts,

political corruption and brigandage by locals and also the dirty underbelly of the business world (Uche, 1989). Their persistent and strong investigative reporting, although considered pernicious by the colonial establishments, proved to be an effective weapon in creating public awareness and galvanizing opposition against some insidious policies of the era (Omu, 1978; Uche, 1989; Jibo & Okoosi-simbine, 2003). The doggedness of early newspapers particularly their knack for investigative stories helped set a standard for hard-hitting investigative reporting (Uche, 1989).

The tradition of investigative journalism continued after independence in the early 1960s and even during the 29 years of repressive military regimes in the 90s (Epku, 1990). Investigative journalism became a dominant feature in the Nigerian mediascape especially during the second military Junta between 1983 and 1999 and during the third republic when courageous journalists from the stable of *NewsWatch*, *Tell*, *The News*, *Tempo* and other independently owned news magazines, individually and collectively regularly turned out ground-breaking stories that exposed the shenanigans of the military and their civilian collaborators (Adebanwi, 2008; Dare, 2011). For instance, in 1999 when a certain Salisu Buhari emerged as the Speaker of the Nigerian House of Representatives, little did the public know that he was a duplicitous character until *The News* magazine uncovered evidence showing he lied about his age and qualification. The report led to his subsequent resignation (Dare, 2011). Without this piece of investigative reporting, Mr Buhari may still be in the political scene today perhaps, occupying a front row among the elite club of morally challenged politicians pontificating about corruption in the country. It was in this period that investigative magazines such as *Newswatch*, *Tell* and *The News* rose to not only question the legitimacy of and the messianic posturing of the military but also provide pungent but cogent and objective factual evidence to counter some ill-thought government policies of the junta especially the economic programs based on International Monetary Fund goals (Ojo, 2007; Torwel, 2008).

A good example is an attempt by the Obasanjo administration to increase fuel prices. The news magazines' informed analyses of the grave economic implications of a rise in petrol price forced Obasanjo to abandon its plan to increase fuel prices (Torwel, 2008). Whether during the military regimes of Generals Babaginda or Abubakar the news magazines were consistent in ensuring they held Government responsible for their actions (Ojo, 2007; Olukotun, 2006). Even at the peak of the tyranny of the iron-fist reign of the brutal Abacha regime, reckoned to be the "harshes, most kleptocratic regime in Nigeria's history," this newsweeklies especially *News Watch*, managed to "set a new standard for combative, investigative journalism" (Epku, 1990; Bourne 2018, p. 167). When the journalists were eventually hunted out of town by security officials, they resorted to "guerrilla journalism," and from their hideouts continued to clandestinely report and publish scoops that rattled the military junta even the more.

In the present time, investigative journalism focused on uncovering corruption appears to have petered out (Bourne, 2018). *Premium Times* and to some extent, *The Cable* both online newspapers, are the newspapers seriously committed to publishing investigative reports in Nigeria. It was *Premium Times* that uncovered the fact that the former finance minister, Kemi Adeosun skipped the mandatory National Youth Service Corps for graduates and forged the service certificate. Following the outrage the revelation ignited, the minister was forced to give up her job. Generally, other bigger and well-resourced newspapers have tended to relegate investigative reporting. Kenneth Tadaferua, former editor with *Thisday* newspaper now corporate communication consultant and public affairs analyst, agreed few are newspapers in pursuit of investigative reporting today.

According to Tadaferua, the high percent of the papers are about reporting activities or praise-singing the powerful in society. Investigative stories and special reports revealing the ills of society and fighting the cause of the people appear to have taken a backseat" (Tadaferua, Interview, August 17, 2018). This is even as the landscape is littered with unresolved social questions and worrying political malfeasances in the public and corporate spaces that require urgent investigations.

The dynamics of newspaper ownership and the political circumstances before and after 1999 may be plausible reasons for the paucity of investigative reports. During the repressive military era in the 1990s, the news organizations in the vanguard of investigative journalism were owned by private citizens with no known allegiance to politicians or the military junta, which engendered journalism autonomy. In contrast, the main newspapers today are owned by politicians who are more interested in journalism that protects or furthers their political interests (Adesoji, 2010; Omenugha, Omenugha & Uzuegbunam, 2013; Yusha'u, 2015). According to Oso (2012), the Nigerian press "has functioned more as organs of propaganda and publicity than objective carriers of information" (p. 27).

Investigative journalism is also constrained by challenges of material deprivation and poor capitalization, which generally lead to corrupt journalistic practices such as 'brown envelope journalism' (Nwabueze, 2010; Omenugha & Oji, 2008; Skjerdal, 2010). There is also the clash of interest. In Nigeria, the government is the biggest business and political patronage and connection with those in power are the easiest ways to fame and wealth. As a result, many journalists have developed cosy and sometimes illicit relationships with political actors to obtain contracts or appointments for themselves or close relations, and this tends to compromise their autonomy and ability to hold these officials to account (Agbaje, 1992; Oso, 2012). When it comes to the issue of uncovering corruption, the Nigerian press has been found wanting (Suleiman, 2017). For instance, Since 2015 that General Mohammed Buhari came to power, his administration and the anti-corruption agencies, particularly the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) have regularly regaled the public with names of alleged looters and the incredible amount they pillaged from the Nigerian commonwealth. The newspapers generally report these humongous thefts and alleged cases of embezzlement in banner headlines, but after that, there is no follow-up or attempt to conduct an independent investigation to ascertain the veracity or otherwise, of the staggering figures bandied about by government and the anti-corruption agencies. "Many of the scandals revealed since the return of democracy have come to light in the USA and the courts of the UK" (Bourne, 2018 p. 170).

This may not be unconnected with corruption and bribery. Politicians have long compromised journalists through monetary and material incentives (Ciboh, 2017; Oso, 2012). During the 11 years regime of Ibrahim Babaginda, for instance, many journalists were "on the payroll of state governors and prominent politicians. The politicians give them gifts of lands, cars and sponsor them on pilgrimages to Mecca and Jerusalem, among other inducements" (Oso, 2012, p. 33). The trend has since been normalized in the political and business circles. These corrupt practices along with lack of journalism autonomy are, in part, the reason journalists and media houses fail to investigate political malfeasances or challenge unjust governance across the country. The concept of investigative journalism is one without a definitive or absolute meaning. The next section presents the various conception of investigative journalism.

Conceptualizing Investigative Journalism

The concept of investigative journalism is sometimes muddled and faced with inconsistent interpretations. Sometimes, as is the case in Nigeria, reports emanating from leaked documents are erroneously labelled as investigative reporting. In some cases, especially in developing countries including Nigeria, stories that “focus on crime or corruption, analysis, or even outright opinion pieces” are often mislabelled as investigative journalism (Kaplan, 2013 p. 10). UNESCO’s journalism handbook, *Story-Based Inquiry*, describes investigative journalism as encompassing reporting that:

Involves exposing to the public matters that are concealed—either deliberately by someone in a position of power, or accidentally, behind a chaotic mass of facts and circumstances that obscure understanding. It requires using both secret and open sources and documents.

The Dutch investigative reporters’ group VVOJ describes investigative journalism as “critical and thorough journalism.” It has been argued that investigative journalism goes beyond scoops from secondary sources but encompasses “a set of methodologies that are a craft, and take years to master” (Kaplan, 2013 p. 10). For a story to stand the test of investigative journalism, it requires rigorous sometimes, long-drawn, and systematic investigation using mainly primary sources (Yusha’u, 2009). The common and overarching thread emerging from the various definitions of investigative journalism is the need for far-reaching research and focus on the “matters which affect the general public of which the society generally does not approve but is unaware” (De Burgh, 2003 p. 806). In the Nigerian media space, most of the stories dubbed exclusives, or investigative reports are stories sourced from leaked documents from politically exposed persons or government agencies (Ciboh, 2017). While leaked documents are legitimate and can provide a good lead, relying solely on such secondary sources or leaked documents exposes the journalist to manipulation (Ettema & Glasser, 2007, p. 494). This strategy not only negates the essence of investigative journalism, which revolves around a rigorous probe but also compromises the objectivity of the report. The challenge of the leaked document is that frequently, those who leak these documents are not always without some ulterior motives or interests. In a divisive political environment like Nigeria, with a highly partisan and compromised media space, leaked records from establishment sources have proven to be not only a potent propaganda tool but also a lethal weapon to intimidate, silence, and damage the reputation of perceived political opponents.

The aim of investigative journalism, therefore, should be to promote the public good (Goddard, 2006) and not to serve as a platform for blackmail, witch-hunt, or character assassination. Investigative journalism that is socially responsible is that which “seeks to discuss and interpret the value of justice and affirm the importance or otherwise of right and wrong, innocence, and guilt by analyzing, criticizing, and interpreting the case under journalistic investigation” (Yusha’u, 2009, p. 158). In this study, investigative journalism represents independent, detailed and analytical stories in the public good, aimed at exposing political and corporate malfeasances, human rights abuses, constitutional breaches as well as unwholesome and unethical practices involving public and private citizens. This definition conceptualizes investigative journalism as a social responsibility. This section draws on the theoretical framework of journalists as the watchdog of society.

Investigative Reporting as Social Responsibility

Investigative journalism is hinged on the social responsibility theory of the press (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956). As the watchdog of society, the media owes it to the society

not just to provide truthful, fair, and useful information about activities in the environment but also to uphold human rights and political freedom and hold leaders in private and public spaces accountable for their deeds and misdeeds albeit ethically and professionally (McQuail, 2010). Social Responsibility is a normative theory built around structural-functionalism that focuses on promoting solidarity and stability among the various social units and institutions especially in a democratic society (Macionis, 2016). Under the theory, the allegiance of the media is first to the public. In other words, the media whether privately or publicly owned is seen as a public trust which exists primarily to serve the interest of the wider society. The watchdog role of the press manifests through investigative journalism (Lynch & Crawford, 2011). As the ombudsman of the society, the press is continually on the lookout for political and corporate malfeasances, abuses of power, corrupt practices, and criminality involving both public and private citizens. Here, investigative journalists function not only as “educators” but also as “keepers of the public conscience” (Brennen, 2000, p. 109), providing information on which decisions can be based. When properly executed, investigative journalism can help foster accountability, engender more transparency in governance and help strengthen civil society (Adebanwi & Obadare, 2011b; Lynch & Crawford, 2011).

The social responsibility theory assumes the press is free to perform its obligations to society. But contrary to this assumption, the press is not completely free from government control and interference. There are psychological and sociological encumbrances that limit the watchdog role of the press. For instance, power and class relations function to constrain the ability of the press to discharge their obligations. In the case of Nigeria, as pointed out by Ciboh (2017) branches of government can use monetary incentives, intimidation, and violence to water down the independence of the press and, consequently, its capacity to properly reflect public opinion. While the social responsibility theory of the press is important in understanding the functions and obligations of the press to society (Scott, 1991) its application to developing democracies like Nigeria is fraught with ubiquitous challenges. Unlike in advanced economies where the media to a large extent, has emerged not just as a public trust but also, an important social unit in which the culture of investigative reporting has become not only entrenched but seen as an essential cornerstone for good governance (Gyuracz, 2016, p. 78) in emerging democracies, the allegiance of the media, whether privately or publicly owned, is scarce to the public.

Since the *modus operandi* of investigative journalism is dynamic and event-based, understanding of newer trends in journalism is of paramount importance. There is a rising trend of social media usages in the process of production, distribution and consumption of news in Nigeria. Such types of usages are also found among broadcast journalists (Agbo & Chukwuma, 2016). Facebook has become a tool of news dissemination in Nigerian news media to enhance the level of engagement with their audiences (Dodds, 2017). Dutta and Gangopadhyay (2019) confirm that digital journalism is making inroads and journalism is getting redefined every day. However, in a study conducted in Nigeria, Ojebuyi and Salawu (2019) argue that user-generated contents can create a climate of negative discourse in news media which could pose a potential threat to news values.

In Nigeria, like in many other emerging democracies, many public media outlets have proven to be government mouthpieces while the privately-owned media organizations have tended to focus on serving the interest of their proprietors and bottom-line. The corollary is that public interest is often circumscribed. As a functionalist approach, therefore, the social responsibility theory does not account for the change in society either does it explain human social behaviour. The Rational Choice Theory provides an additional

explanatory framework for unpacking why Nigerian journalists are not engaging in investigative journalism. The theory suggests that individuals would always weigh the costs and benefits of their actions concerning any social phenomenon and will then choose the set of actions that will give them optimal benefits (Friedman, 1953). In other words, an individual's decision to carry out an act is largely driven by the envisaged profitable outcomes of that action. The economic motive thesis is not without criticisms. Pierre Bourdieu argues that social actions do not always operate solely through a voluntary agency in which individuals always evaluate according to clear rational and economic principles. There are other intervening variables like social, economic and cultural agents that underpin every social action. Social scientists such as Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Maxwell (2012) who premise their studies on epistemological constructivism paradigm argue that our perception and belief concerning any phenomenon in our environment is not always objective but constructed or shaped by our previous knowledge and interaction, such constructions cannot be taken as absolute truth. In other words, the existing theory about reality, in this case, investigative journalism, is inevitably incomplete. As Maxwell (2012) rightly observed, "no theory can illuminate everything." In light of the inadequacy of the above theories, this study, therefore, relies on empirical theory, on which Figure 1 is based.

Methodology

Previous studies (Ciboh, 2017; Omenugha & Oji, 2008; Suleiman, 2017) suggest that the state of investigative reporting is poor. Less than a quarter of stories in the major newspapers are sourced through investigative processes, while news from routine or slated events accounts for over three-quarters of newspaper contents. Many journalists interviewed by Yusha'u (2009) admit that investigative journalism is not fully practised in Nigeria. However, the above empirical studies did not interview journalists and other stakeholders to find out why newspapers and journalists are not engaging in investigative reporting. This study used the qualitative approach of the interview to examine the factors militating against robust investigative journalism from the perspective of practitioners with a focus on strategies to help revitalize and sustain the craft in Nigeria. A total of 25 structured interviews were used in this article. Interviewees were asked to comment on whether or not investigative journalism in Nigeria has nosedived and to state the factors that they thought could be responsible for the decline of investigative journalism. Finally, the interviewees were asked to suggest measures that news organizations and journalists can adopt to enhance investigative journalism. The Interviewees were purposively selected and comprised three Journalism teachers from the University of Lagos, Babcock University and Nigeria Institute of Journalism, three serving and one retired editors, 16 senior reporters and two civil society activists and media critics based in Lagos and Abuja (only the names and affiliations of those who consented were used in this study). Data were analyzed inductively using closely linked themes.

Results

Four main themes emerged from data analysis as shown diagrammatically in Figure 1. The findings are discussed under two overarching themes – sociological constraints and professional deficits.

Sociological Constraints

Yusha'u (2009, p. 167) contends that journalism "cannot be practised outside the culture and political system in which it is practised." The challenge facing investigative journalism as evinced from those interviewed appears linked to cultural and environmental factors rather than psychological or personal characteristics of journalists. These sociological factors, as captured in Figure 1, include ownership structure, peer pressure, and self-regulation; Poor or non-existent budget, poor remuneration and lack of insurance, ethnoreligious considerations, changing media culture, and lack of capacity. These variables are analyzed in the subsequent section in no particular order.

Ownership Structure

Consistent with previous research (Agbaje, 1992; Uche, 1989), the ownership structure of the media institutions were identified by the majority of the interviewees as a major stumbling block to investigative reporting. Most media organizations in Nigeria are owned by individuals with vested political and economic interests, and this affects their capacity to carry out investigative reporting. For example, the media conglomerate comprising *The Nation Newspaper*, *Television Continental*, and *Radio Continental* (now *Max FM 103.5*) is owned by one of the national leaders of the ruling party in Nigeria. Another media group, DAAR communication, operators of *African Independent Television*, *Raypower*, *101.5 FM*, and *Faaji FM 105.1*, is owned by a prominent member of the opposition party. A notable businessman and serving senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria owns *Silverbird Television* and *Rhythm FM*. The *Sun* newspaper and *Telegraph* is owned by a former governor of one of the south-east states in Nigeria. Although some of the major national dailies such as *Vanguard*, *ThisDay*, and *Daily Trust* are owned and managed by former journalists, some analysts such as Tadaferua (Interview, August 17, 2018) holds that investigative reporting in these papers remains constrained as the publishers have long become part and parcel of the power structure. This theory is however inconsistent with recent happenings, which suggests that the perceived closeness to power could be a myth. For instance, on January 6, 2019, soldiers and a team from Department of State Security (DSS) invaded *Daily Trust* office and arrested the regional editor and a reporter (Nwezeh & Olugbode, 2019).

But potential conflicts of interest remain a challenge. Publishing is, after all, a human enterprise, and is therefore susceptible to the common human failings. Publishers and journalists are not always altruistic. Money and politics can skew the investigative process. Reporters Without Borders (2015) report that Nigeria Press is intricately interwoven with the political and business interests of the owners. In the last two decades, the media landscape has become increasingly partisan. Many newspapers are either aligned to some political parties or tended to pander to the political interest of their owners. Expectedly, these newspapers cherry-pick stories that will flatter their patrons and brush aside or "kill" stories that appear unfavourable. This phenomenon is not peculiar to Nigeria. In his survey of Global investigative journalism, Kaplan (2013, p. 18) reported that "a major obstacle, investigative reporters note, is that local media ownership itself often represents part of the problem, with many owners tied to the same corrosive power structure as corrupt politicians, security forces, and organized crime." The Romanian Center for Investigative Journalism revealed that almost half of the media owners in Bucharest, the capital had been investigated for "racketeering or money laundering". Similar situations were also reported in Bosnia by the Bosnian Center for Investigative Reporting (Kaplan, 2013, p. 18).

The majority of the interviewees agreed ownership exert a significant influence on investigative journalism. According to Babjide Johnson, a Journalism teacher at the Nigerian Institute of Journalism, the ownership structure of the Nigeria press is a major hindrance to investigative reporting.” The stranglehold of the political class over the media is telling on journalism practice especially, investigative reporting as these owners cannot afford to rock the boat” (Johnson, Interview July 20, 2018). Politically exposed media owners are unlikely to allow their media houses to investigate or publish critical stories about abuses of power involving their political associates (Kaplan, 2013, p.18). Veteran journalist, Tunde Olakunle agreed:

Most media houses are owned by politicians whose sole aim is to propagate their interest. The ownership structure of this nature can only promote patronage. Attempt to dig deep is a call for pig fight that virtually all the proprietors would particularly love to avoid. It is therefore not incorrect to say that this particular factor accounts for too much dependency on “news handouts” from government houses and institutions (Olakunle, Interview August 30, 2018).

Tadaferua reveals that a particular owner of the national newspaper stipulates that no adverse report about certain individuals and organizations must be published without his clearance. This type of environment he says impedes investigative reporting— “there is no way investigative journalism can thrive in an organization where the owner treats certain entities as sacred cows” (Tadaferau, Interview, August 17, 2018). This finding is consistent with previous studies, which show that both public and privately owned media houses are primarily concerned with satisfying the narrow interests of the owners (Agbaje, 1992; Uche, 1989).

Peer Pressure and Self-Censorship

Another sociological factor identified by interviewees as limiting investigative reporting is a peer or fraternal pressure and self-censorship. The past decades have seen some journalists making significant inroads into the political scene. At no point in the history of Nigeria, had journalists this major role to play in public governance. A former President of Nigerian Union of Journalist, Smart Adeyemi was elected as senator from Kogi West for two terms; former Nigerian Guild of Editors, Late Remi Oyo, was the Chief media aide to President Olusegun Obasanjo. Rueben Abati, columnists and editorial chairman of the *Guardian* served as the media adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan. Presently, Femi Adesina and Garba Shehu, both former Presidents of Nigerian Guild of Editors, function as the media advisor and spokesperson, respectively, for General Mohammadu Buhari. There are several other political editors, journalists, and broadcasters who have become politicians or serving as spokespersons or media advisers to governors, senators, and other political appointees. Many see this trend as putting square pegs in square holes, and positive development for the fledgeling democracy in that it enhances the quality of representation. However, Oso (2012, p. 32) holds that these individuals can “act as a form of an informal channel of influence flow to media organizations.” Babajide Johnson contends that peer pressure can hinder the capacity of the press to scrutinize public governance given that these “political journalists wield enormous influence over their peers.” He continues:

Remember, many of these top journalists were recruited not just because of their ability to orchestrate spins but also for their ability to influence their peers in a time of crisis. It is an open secret that

their colleagues do defer to them, including 'killing' explosive stories that could embarrass their principals. They have big budgets and other freebies that they use to entice or extract allegiance. So that's why you don't see some of these papers carrying out any serious investigation on some of the burning national issues (Johnson, Interview July 20, 2018).

Outside peer pressure is the issue of self-censorship, in which virtually all the media houses impose on themselves some internal control and censoring of what reporters, writers, and columnists turn in. Some stories, according to Babajide Johnson, have been killed by internal gatekeepers, who for ownership and, or political interest refused to publish investigative stories of their reporters, and such practices would not allow investigative journalism to flourish (Johnson, Interview July 20, 2018). Collins (2001, p.8) describes the recourse to self-censorship as "journalists silencing themselves to enrich themselves." The practice of self-regulation, which is rampant in media organizations owned by politically exposed individuals exists ostensibly, to filter or weed out any material that may be offensive to the political affiliations or interest of newspaper owners.

Poor or Non-Existent Budget

Investigative reporting can be a convoluted process requiring a huge outlay of human and material resources. The majority of the interviewees identified a poor or non-existent budget for investigative projects as an important factor that imperils investigative reporting, a finding which is consistent with past research (Ekpu, 1990). Tadaferua holds that Nigerian newspapers are yet to prioritize investigative journalism as an aspect of their business that not only requires special attention but also adequate funding.

In the many years, I spent in journalism practice either at *This Week*, *Business* magazine or the *Guardian* and even during time as a member of the Editorial Board of *ThisDay*, I can't recollect management of these organizations budgeting specifically for investigative journalism and I doubt if any of the traditional newspapers do so even now. Investigation and hunting for scoops were regarded as part of the reporter's duties (Tadaferua, Interview, August 17, 2018).

Another interviewee, a serving editor who does not want his name mentioned, stated that he had, on several occasions, used his money to assist reporters assigned to investigate some stories.

In my organization we strive to investigate stories thoroughly, sometimes, may take weeks or months to unravel and often, these assignments may involve the reporter travelling outside the base. This kind of journalism requires proper funding. Unfortunately, most newspapers do not have such resources and are unable to carry out investigative journalism in a sustainable manner (Anonymous, Interview August 28, 2018).

This finding is consistent with previous studies that found that Nigerian newspapers budget little or no money for investigative journalism (Anyadike, 2013; Asemah & Asogwa, 2012).

Tadaferua attributes the inability of most Nigerian newspapers to adequately fund investigative journalism to "poor revenue." Like other business ventures, the fortunes of a newspaper house are predicted on the overall health of the larger economy. The traditional print media in Nigeria continues to battle shrinking sales and low advertising revenue in an unproductive economy where government and politics are the biggest business

with standards of living falling relentlessly. Many Nigerians have migrated to social media where, with their smartphones and other internet-enabled devices, they can easily access a plethora of information (Nwachukwu & Onyenankeya, 2017). Smartphones and social media have radicalized and liberalized the information and communication space in Nigeria (Ajiboye, Adu & Wojuade, 2007). Studies have shown that many newspaper readers prefer the free online version which they can access through the internet (Ekharefor, Asemah, & Edegoh, 2013; Hassan & Azmi, 2018; Mathew, Ogedebe & Adeniji, 2013). Apart from dwindling readership, the print media has to contend with the high cost of newsprint which skyrocketed in the wake of the economic downturn that gripped the country since 2016. Amid a parlous economy, the print media currently depends on “subsidies” (Bourne, 2018, p. 163), but even that has nosedived significantly.

Except there is a turn in the economy and a deliberate reimagining of the newspaper business to deal with the challenge of digital media, the traditional print media will continue to struggle, and I don't see investigative journalism receiving any serious budget attention in the foreseeable future...

The papers are barely surviving (Tadaferua, Interview, August 17, 2018).

To augment the dwindling income, most of the newspapers have resulted in intense commercialization in which press releases are reported as lead stories. In many instances, inside features and news pages are paid for as “advertorials” for political and business organizations or personalities (Tadaferua, Interview August 17, 2018). However, the trend in which news is literally on sale (Omenugha & Oji, 2008; Oso, 2012) is not restricted to the Nigerian print mediascape. It is a practice that is rife even in advanced democracies. John argues that the Nigerian media landscape especially the poor capitalization of most media houses, compel them to pay more attention to revenue-generating stories than investigative reports:

The media operate as a business enterprise. And like all enterprises, owners are invariably keen on deploying resources to the part of the business that will grow bottom-line. Investigative journalism may bring credibility and enhance the reputation of the brand over time, but you and I know that in this clime, it is not always best for business (John, Interview July 1, 2018).

The Nexus of Clientelism

Past research (Oso, 2012; Hanson, 2016) has demonstrated that relations between owners and business or political powerholders can compromise journalistic autonomy. The majority of the interviewees identified clientelism as not only an entrenched practice in Nigeria but a key factor that obstructs investigative journalism. Zebulum and John serving editors with Lagos based newspapers agreed that the chase for money could jeopardize and skew investigations.

Newspapers have long commercialized their news offering in a bid to boost dwindling revenue and remain afloat. Of course, this imperils investigative journalism as a newspaper house would be hard-pressed, pursuing a story that could embarrass its clients (Zebulum, Interview July 1, 2018).

Virtually all the newspapers depend on adverts or patronage from politically exposed persons or their business affiliates for survival. So as the saying goes, they will not want to go against the fingers that feed them (John, Interview July 1, 2018).

The practice of providing editorial support to political or business clients in exchange for financial support in the form of advertisement is encapsulated in the notion of clientelism. Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002, pp. 182-183) describe clientelism as a form of “social organization in which access to social resources is controlled by patrons and delivered to clients in exchange for deference and various kinds of support.” In the face of the rising cost of newsprint, declining readership, many Nigerian newspapers have resorted to packaging their contents “as a product that should appeal to advertisers as well as readers” (Hanson, 2016, p. 140). Some of these packages include assurances that newspapers would not beam their investigative searchlights on their valued clients’ business or publish any story that might be untoward.

In what appears a desperate attempt to generate income, some Nigerian newspapers have developed an implicit but potent brand of clientelism, which Johnston describes as *award journalism*. Here, newspapers dish out contrived recognitions such as ‘Governor of the Year,’ ‘Personality of the Year’; ‘Man of the Year’ to supposedly deserving individuals. But in truth, it is merely a quid-pro-quo arrangement in which only those who accept to either sponsor the award or pay an agreed amount are selected for these phoney awards. Johnson argues that the practice of giving bogus awards to the people the press ought to be policing is not only antithetical to the watchdog role of the press as enshrined in Section 22 of 1999 Constitution as amended but also capable of circumscribing the ability of the press to conduct effective investigative journalism:

In a situation whereby the ‘watchdog’ has become the ‘reward dog,’ dishing out phoney awards that are bought with cash or guaranteed supplements worth millions of Naira, investigative journalism is bound to be compromised (Johnson, Interview July 20, 2018).

Sometimes, clientelism can be subtle and duplicitous. For instance, in most Nigeria newspapers, an advertisement which has been paid for is presented as ‘advertorial’ (Oso, 2012), thus giving the impression that it is an independently sourced story, but in reality, it is merely undiluted public relations spin. For many Nigerian newspapers struggling to survive in the face of lean resources, there is rarely enough money to channel into an investigative enterprise that may require sustained funding over a long period. Unlike in western societies, there are no notable local foundations or corporate entities that provide grants or technical support for investigative journalism. Presently, only the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism provides technical support for investigative reporting.

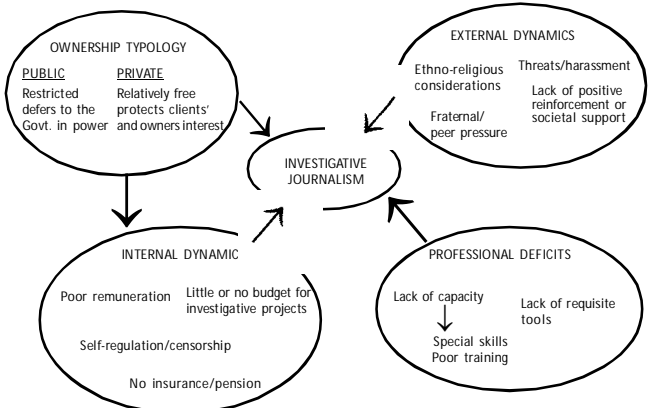


Figure 1. Sociological and professional factors affecting Investigative Journalism. (Source: Author, 2019)

Poor Remuneration and Lack of Insurance for Journalists

The majority of those interviewed agreed that poor remuneration and lack of insurance for journalists are important underlying factors for the indifference toward investigative reporting. One of the interviewees and Journalism teacher at Babcock University, Kolade Ajilore, argues that Journalists starved of income would certainly be at the mercy of the political elites. "How would journalists develop or maintain the courage to investigate the political class that serves as their lifeline (Kolade, Interview July 25, 2018). Virtually all the interviewees agreed that poor remuneration increases the vulnerability of journalists to corrupt practices and compromises journalistic integrity:

Investigative journalism comes along with hazards, but there are just one or two media houses in the country that can pay just a stingy compensation for all these. Only the "crazy journalists" stick out their necks! (Olakunle, Interview August 30, 2018).

Remuneration in the media industry is poor compared to other sectors, such as banking and manufacturing. Some publishers often cream out revenues from adverts and sponsorships weekly, leaving journalists to wait months on end without pay. A proprietor of one of Nigeria's private broadcasting stations was alleged to have told his reporters that their identification card was their meal ticket. Meaning, they should leverage the name and power of the medium to enrich themselves. Some newspaper houses also adopt this unwritten convention in which reporters are at liberty to receive monetary gifts and freebies from sources (Yusha'u & Ramirez, 2018).

But there exist presently media outlets such as the *Punch* which frown at such practices. This comes with consequences including being ostracised by business and the political class. The *News* and the defunct *Next* newspaper established by Pulitzer award-winning journalist, Dele Olojede, were dedicated to journalism based on robust investigative reporting and had stringent measures which discouraged reporters from developing close ties with or receiving bribes from sources (Olukotun, 2006). But the papers especially *Next* was snubbed by the business community.

Non-payment of salaries has the potential to create a conflict of interest for many journalists. It has been argued that journalists can become conflicted and inconsistent in terms of their journalistic commitments when faced with despotic pressure and poverty (White & Mabweazara, 2018). A poorly paid and poorly trained journalist with no risk insurance in a newspaper owned by politically exposed individuals or beholden to vested interests is unlikely to engage in investigative reporting. The asymmetric relationship between the press and powerholders or dominant groups in the society opens journalists to corruption, manipulation, and exploitation.

The temptation to compromise is high for journalists owed six to eight months' salary arrears. "Many eventually end up working for those they are supposed to investigate and monitor." (Johnson Interview July 20, 2018). According to Tejumaiye, a mass communication scholar at the University of Lagos, a journalist with empty pocket not knowing where the next meal will come from would prefer to be bribed than to conduct an investigation that will fetch him nothing (Interview July 26, 2018).

Poor and irregular salaries also result in massive job turnovers. Very few Nigerian journalists stay in the profession for long (Bourne, 2018, p. 169). Majority of Nigerian journalists see journalism as a stepping stone to other lucrative professions, and a considerable number of those who are committed to the profession engage in "moonlighting" (White & Mabweazara, 2018) and this has paved the way for unprincipled

elements to infiltrate the profession (Tejumaiye, Interview July 26, 2018). Kolade agreed. “This used to be a noble profession that attracts pride among its practitioners, now is left in tatters – charlatans have taken centre stage, and the knack for investigative journalism is gone (Kolade, Interview July 25, 2018).

The near-zero protection for journalists by their employers remains a major disincentive for venturing into investigative journalism. Many journalists according to one of the interviewees are unwilling to undertake investigative reporting, not necessarily because they are risk-averse but because they have no protection or motivation (Zebulum, Interview July 1, 2018). Less than two percent of journalists have life insurance or any pensionable packages. For Investigative journalism fraught with a lot of hazards, including arrests, imprisonments, litigations, and even assassination, lack of protection can be a major deterrent, especially in a society where government and its agencies frequently engage in unlawful acts.

In the past four years, some reporters have been incarcerated for publishing investigative stories. For instance, the editor and publisher of *Weekly Source*, James Abiri, was arrested on June 21, 2016, and locked up for over two years by the State Security Service for republishing a scoop allegedly implicating some military officers. The journalist is currently facing a bogus “capital offence” case at the court (Yahaya, 2019).

On August 14, 2018, *Premium Times* reporter Samuel Ogundipe was arrested and remanded by the Nigerian Police and later arraigned in court in a vain attempt to extract the source of an exclusive published by the newspaper (Okakwu & Iroanusi, 2018). On January 6, 2019, the Nigerian Army Sunday invaded *Daily Trust* regional office of the newspaper and arrested the regional editor along with a reporter, Ibrahim Sawab, over a report that exposed racketeering regarding the counterinsurgency operation in Nigeria's north-east (Haruna, 2019).

For many, therefore, investigative reporting is a path to tread with extreme caution, especially when some journalists who lost their lives while carrying out investigations in the past have not only been forgotten by their employers and society, but their families are presently languishing in penury.

Some journalists who were once passionate about investigative reporting have since backed out. It is an unnecessary risk. Who wants to lose his or her life or family members for a job that nobody cares if you lived or died. The salaries are so meagre, welfare packages almost non-existent. There is not enough motivation to embark on such a high-risk venture. (Zebulum, Interview July 1, 2018).

I sometimes sympathize with the journalists. We know how ruthless the political class can be when its interest is threatened. It means journalists would have a hard option picking between commitments to a thankless, unrewarding job that exposes their security or capitulating to the forces of evil and living a financially rewarding but unethical life. (Kolade, Interview July 25, 2018)

Arrests, detention, and prosecution of journalists using nebulous laws have long been used by the Nigerian authorities to scare and discourage journalists from investigating and publishing unfavourable. For instance, during the spate of military interventions, some newspapers were proscribed as retribution for investigating or commenting about government activities (Ojebode, 2011). Some investigative reporters were also imprisoned on trumped-up charges; many were forced to resign from their duty posts, while a few lost

their lives in the process of investigating explosives stories. In 1994, using the ill-famous Decree 4, the General Mohammed Buhari dictatorship incarcerated two *Guardian* reporters, Nduka Irabor and Tunde Thompson and fined their newspaper N50000, the equivalent of US \$50,000 (Bourne, 2018 p. 167) for constituting public “nuisance” (Udomisor & Udoh, 2015). In 1986, Dele Giwa, editor of *Newswatch*, which pioneered a “more rigorous type” of investigative journalism, was assassinated through a parcel bomb reportedly to stop him from publishing a damning report on drug trafficking linked to General Babangida and other top military brass. Tunde Oladepo of *The Guardian* and Bagulda Kaltho, the investigative journalist of *The News* magazine, are generally thought to have been murdered by the General Sani Abacha regime.

Although there are strong reasons to believe the regimes of Babangida and Abacha were responsible for the death of these journalists, there is yet no hard evidence to prove these long-held suspicions. However, there is no denying the fact that many journalists were incarcerated during the regimes of the duo. For instance, Kunle Ajibade, executive editor of *The News* magazine was jailed for life on contrived allegations of supporting coup-plotting against the Abacha government. He was later released after serving three years. Other journalists that served prison terms on account of their investigative reporting were George Mbah of *Tell* magazine, Chris Anyanwu of *The Sunday Magazine* (TSM), and Ben Charles Obi of the *Weekend Classique*. In some circumstances where the ‘offending journalists’ could not be immediately arrested their close relatives including children were arrested and locked up (Adebanwi, 2008; Ojebode, 2011). Subsequent governments have always resorted to these strategies to muzzle the media.

Investigative journalism, whether in advanced or emerging democracies, could be a dangerous venture. It is always a huge risk-taking on dictators, corrupt politicians, criminal warlords, and corporate thieves because they often don’t want their activities to be scrutinized (Gyuracz, 2016). As Kaplan (2013, p. 47) has noted: “even in the best of times and the freest of societies, investigative journalism can be risky, expensive, and controversial.” Because investigative journalists attempt to uncover wrongs, abuses of power, and economic offences, they are generally unpopular with people of influence (De Burgh, 2003) or those “who become the objects of its scrutiny” (Ekpu, 1990, p. 100). Across the globe, investigative journalists are often perceived as “nuisance in the eyes of those who prefer that their activities remain unscrutinized and outside the public realm” (Gyuracz, 2016, p. 78). This category of people—criminals, unscrupulous politicians, and despotic leaders can be ruthless when their interests are threatened. Bourne (2018, p. 170) states that “exposing corruption can be vulnerable to legal action” which sometimes, can lead to imprisonment

Ethno-Religious Considerations

Interviewees were unanimous that ethnoreligious considerations impact significantly on the willingness of journalists to carry out investigative reporting. This is consistent with past research, which has identified primordial sentiments as a major challenge to newspaper coverage especially contentious issues (Demarest & Langer, 2018; Oso, 2012; Uche, 1989; Yusha’u, 2015). The media in Nigeria developed and crystallized along ethnic lines especially during the period leading to independence and the First Republic (Adebayo, 2017). The “inter-ethnic conflict generated” in that era has remained “the bane of the Nigerian press ever since” (Oso, 2012 p. 25). Coverage of issues or personalities is often underlined by ethnic undertones (Dare, 2011 p. 12). The allegiance to ethnic and religious affiliations often influences the decision to investigate certain issues or personalities involved in a

misdeemeanour. Even when an investigation is carried out at all, the tone, depth, and outcome of such investigations often bear ethnic or religious colourations. For instance, when *Premium Times* broke the NYSC certificate scandal story involving the former finance minister, Kemi Adeosun some notable newspapers from the Southwest of Nigeria, where the minister comes from either glossed over the matter or gave it a total blackout. When the minister eventually resigned, these papers resorted to framing the resignation as an act of integrity and statesmanship. Johnson says the development is not unconnected with the tendency of Nigerian journalists to protect their own:

You know most of the editors are from the minister's ethnic group, so they cannot afford to roast their own, especially since she is a member of the ruling party, which most of the dailies are beholden to. The coverage would have taken a different dimension if she were from another ethnic group. Sad, but that's the reality of today's Nigerian press (Johnson, Interview July 20, 2018).

Professor of Communication, Ralph Akinfeleye (2007) describes this kind of journalism practice as "journalism of next-of-kin." There is no doubt the Nigerian media is polarised along ethnic divides and often amplifies and exploit the country's many fault lines. However, the argument over ethnic affinity and its influence in swaying news coverage or investigation remain speculative if not a sweeping generalization. For instance, in the case of the exposed forgery scandal involving the former finance minister, the owners of *Premium Times* and the reporter that investigated the story share the same ethnoreligious background as the minister.

Changing Media Culture

It is generally believed that the Nigerian media has transformed from its culture of public-spirited journalism to a more business-oriented type of journalism where both newspaper proprietors and journalists are driven mainly by monetary gains. Eminent newspaper columnist and journalism scholar, Rueben Abati (2000) had argued over two decades ago that Nigeria newspapers have a fervent interest in the business side of journalism. This observation remains true even today. The transformation from public focused journalism to one driven by profit contributes to weakening investigative reporting in Nigeria, according to most of the interviewees. They hold that there is a change in value as many of today's journalists are now more concerned with making money rather than making a name or becoming champions of the common good.

Tadaferua (Interview August 20, 2018) argues that the media has transformed from the earlier culture of heroic and altruistic journalism where practitioners were not only passionate about their jobs but also prepared to risk their lives for the good of society, to a culture where journalism is defined by pecuniary interests. The majority of the interviewees agreed that earlier journalists were more dedicated to upholding ethics of the profession even with unattractive salaries. This crop of journalists they insist saw themselves as social crusaders and regarded their various newspapers as platforms to bring about social change. They were also propelled by the desire to build a name for themselves and paid little or no attention to mercenary considerations (Oso, 2012).

Johnson posits that a large section of the present crop of journalists is driven in the main by the "lure of filthy lucre" (Interview July 20, 2018). According to Zebulum a considerable proportion of journalists are not in the profession to build a reputation or bring about change in the society but to make money. "It's all about what comes into their pockets at the end of the day" (Interview July 1, 2018). Nigerian journalists have long been associated with using their newspapers and positions for personal gratification and

aggrandizement (Skjerdal, 2010). Uche (1989, p. 147) recalls the public accusation of Nigerian journalists as “politically and financially corrupt as one can find individual Nigerian newsmen who will take money or gifts for doing special” favours. Tadaferua agreed:

But in about a decade and a half ago, the zeal and culture of investigative journalism appear to have fizzled out. Blackmail and brown envelopes for money are now commonplace. Lacking in ethics, many reporters ignore professionalism to make money. Many own mansions, other assets and fat bank accounts all bounties from sleaze (Tadferua, Interview August 17, 2018).

As Mabweazara's (2018) study of Zimbabwean journalists has demonstrated, material deprivation tends to compromise professional and ethical standards. When a journalist's take-home pay cannot meet his immediate needs there is a tendency to look for ways to augment the pay. Like in Zimbabwe, Nigerian journalists are confronted with the challenges of material deprivation and poor capitalization. Poor working conditions, poor pay, in particular, contributes to the culture of indifference to investigative reporting. Journalists appear more concerned chasing after stories, which will bring in fatty brown envelopes. For individual journalists, it is plausible that monetary benefits may be a major consideration in deciding whether to investigate or not to investigate a story, but we argue that this is only possible because of the prevailing unethical and mercantile media environment. In an ethical environment, where the press is seen as a public trust, and the newspaper has a tradition of investigation, the social good that society will benefit from an investigative story often outweighs individual gratifications.

There is a sense that many of the interviewees feel discouraged that society seems not to have been affected positively by previous wrongdoings uncovered by the media. According to one of the interviewees Zebulum, society has failed to leverage several cases of corruption and abuses of power to demand justice and accountability. Zebulum, insists, the Nigerian civil society is so docile and appears to have accepted these malfeasances as new normal.

In other climes, the citizens not only appropriate investigative reports but demand for action. Here, no amount of investigative journalism has moved Nigeria forward. Nigeria moves from bad to worse in spite of all the past investigative reports, so the question is, why to continue wasting our time?" (Zebulum, Interview July 1, 2018).

Generally, most of the interviewees agreed that investigative journalism lacks societal support, especially from the dominant group in society. White and Mabweazara (2018, p.1) argue that journalists committed to providing independent and accurate news often have to contend with frustration from “entrenched personalistic and neo-patrimonial governance systems.” A typical example is *The Next* newspaper, which received little or no advertising support from the political and business establishment and eventually collapsed.

Professional Deficits

Investigative reporting can be a rigorous, convoluted process, and sometimes, it can take years and multilateral collaborations to conclude (Ettema & Glasser, 2007). This requires special skills that come from rigorous training but also tenacity, curiosity, and sometimes, an element of scepticism, key in unearthing the truth. The interviewees were unanimous that a great number of Nigerian journalists do not have the necessary skills or capacity to conduct investigative journalism. This is due largely to inadequate training. Tejumaiye contends that students are not well trained in the skill of investigative reporting in journalism schools, arguing that “they require long term training and retraining to have an

effective outcome in the field” (Interview July 2018). Nigerian newspapers rarely organize workshops or training programs for incoming or even established reporters.

All the interviewees agreed that not many media organizations in Nigeria are well resourced to undertake long term training for reporters. According to Ekpu (1990, p. 115) “third world editors, finding themselves strapped for money, staff, and resources are reluctant to underwrite long-term investigative projects and usually opt for the “quick fix” over the “fishing expedition”. This is consistent with Olakunle’s views that poor training, as well as the lack of rigour in recruiting rookie reporters contribute to the dearth of investigative reporting in Nigeria:

Quality of training is progressively in decline. With poor remuneration of teachers and the absence of equipment, students hardly gain any knowledge of the trade-in school, and this, eventually, leads to shoddy investigations, he said (Olakunle, Interview August 30, 2018).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that found owners’ interferences, gatekeeping, economic, and technological constraints as major factors limiting investigative journalism in Nigeria (Asemah & Asogwa, 2012; Anyadike, 2013).

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that investigative journalism in Nigeria is on bended knees. It is so because of some socio-cultural, economic, and professional elements. Interviewees agreed that ownership structure, which negates journalistic autonomy and poor remuneration which exposes journalists to corrupt and unethical practices are the most important variables that decrease the ability of journalists to engage in investigative reporting. Additionally, fraternity, ethnic affiliation, and issues of capacity combine to whittle down the ability of the press to execute its social responsibility role. Consistent with the Rational Choice Theory, few Nigerian journalists are motivated to carry out investigative stories because the costs far outweigh the benefits.

It is self-evident that the ills of the Nigerian society – divisive politics, corruption, tribalism, nepotism, and mercantilism have infiltrated the journalism profession and, consequently, subdued the ability of newspapers to publish investigative stories. The endemic corrupt practices such as “brown envelope” and the long-standing tradition of clientelism, in which journalism practice is anchored on nurturing cosy relationships between sources and reporters breeds unethical alliances where the “reporter for financial reasons and the source for status reasons” (Yusha’u, 2009; Adesoji, 2010) conspire to conceal a scandal. Lacking the necessary social, institutional and material support in the face of poor remuneration and little or no indemnity, many journalists are hard-pressed embarking on investigative journalism, which is generally perceived as an unmitigated risk.

In spite of the ubiquitous challenges facing investigative journalism in Nigeria, it remains influential not only in exposing corruption and organized crimes but also in stimulating and defining debates over public affairs, which can lead to ethical conduct and good governance. Journalists must see the profession as one that mirrors the society and as a result, live up to their calling as watchdogs. Pecuniary considerations must not becloud their sense of responsibility. Some of the ways suggested by interviewees to revamp the craft of investigative reporting are the restructuring of the journalism curriculum to incorporate intensive practical training lasting up to two to three years on investigative journalism. This calls for synergy between journalism schools and media institutions.

Interviewees also highlighted the need for media houses to provide regular in-

house on-the-job training and retraining of reporters and everyone involved with investigative reporting. Investigative reporters also need to be exposed to external conferences, workshops, and fellowships. There should also be a sustained investment in technologies. Digital technology is increasingly removing barriers to truth discovery, which traditional methods are ill-equipped to accomplish. Perhaps, a critical aspect that needs to be urgently addressed is the issue of protection. This protective support must include paying journalists living wages and providing them special hazard insurance policy and the tools to carry out their craft. Other measures that could help to revitalize and sustain investigative reporting include collaboration with both local and international Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) interested in and committed to media development. For instance, *Premium Times* and *The Cable* are prominent media outfits funded for investigative journalism by the McArthur Foundation. In the face of shrinking revenue media organizations could also consider Crowd Funding as a means of raising funds for the investigative enterprise. This study provides a perspective of challenges of investigative journalism from outside the West.

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